

MEMORANDUM FOR: See reverse for addressees

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the request of the Director of Central Intelligence.

SHERMAN KENT
Director
National Estimates

24 February 1967
(DATE)

FORM NO. 101 REPLACES FORM 10-101
1 AUG 54 WHICH MAY BE USED.

(47)

MEMORANDUM FOR: The Director

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this outside the Agency.

Mr. Kent
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SHERMAN KENT
Director
National Estimates

cc: DDCI

23 February 1967
(DATE)

FORM NO. 101 REPLACES FORM 10-101
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(47)

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
OFFICE OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES

23 February 1967

MEMORANDUM FOR THE DIRECTOR

SUBJECT: Rumbblings of Civil War in Nigeria

The uneasy military-political stalemate in Nigeria seems to be breaking down, and the chances of armed clashes are rising, particularly between the Eastern Region and the Federal Military Government. Even without violent disorders, some US interests, including petroleum producing companies, are likely to be caught between conflicting groups. A situation could arise in which many of the approximately 6- 7,000 US nationals scattered throughout Nigeria might be endangered.

* * * * *

1. Tribal and regional tensions are once again on the rise in Nigeria, and military advisors, both in the Eastern Region and in the Federal Military Government (FMG) in Lagos, are increasingly talking about, perhaps planning, military action against each other. The mutual distrust of the principal antagonists, Colonel Gowon of the FMG and Colonel Ojukwu, Military Governor of the East, has grown since the meetings in Ghana last month resulted in no progress toward resolution

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of basic regional and national issues. Moreover, the degeneration of East-Federal Military Government relations is only the most dangerous aspect of the still deteriorating political-military milieu. Tensions between the Yorubas of the Western Region and ill-disciplined Northern troops stationed there could erupt into violence at any time. And in the vast Northern Region competition for power among a number of heterogeneous tribal and sectional leaders has become much more intense.

2. There are still some deterrents to a civil war, particularly the reluctance of either the East or the FMG to bear the onus for breaking up Nigeria. In addition, there are Gowon's: (a) preference for a peaceful solution; (b) ability so far to resist pressures from his advisors for stern action; (c) lack of confidence in the reliability and capability of his armed forces. There are also Ojukwu's: (a) willingness to accept some sort of confederal arrangement short of Eastern independence; (b) continued uncertainty over his ability to control the minority tribes in the East. Finally, there is also some doubt about the willingness or ability of the military extremists in both camps to carry out their threats.

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3. Nevertheless, practical considerations are giving ground to emotional responses. Gowon and Ojukwu are hardening their stands while considering new moves which cannot fail to anger the other, e.g., the East appears intent upon securing (by the end of March) the oil revenues derived from its region, but now paid to the FMG. Gowon may decree the establishment of new states among the minority areas in the East, clearly an inflammatory step. And he may even go so far as to withdraw Ojukwu's appointment as governor should the latter fail to obey a summons to a prospective regional governors' meeting. Ojukwu seems to be disillusioned by the lack of support from the US and UK, and has turned to French private sources for military equipment (some of which may have already arrived).

4. The FMG has already acquired arms from private Italian firms. The Fourth Battalion in Northern Nigeria has moved from its base in Kaduna to positions along the Eastern Region border. This will increase the chances of a military clash, an FMG attack on the East, or even of an Eastern preemptive military operation against the North. Military commanders on both sides are urging early action to get the jump on their adversary, and should Gowon be pressured, removed, or circumvented by extremists, the chances of inter-regional military clashes would rise swiftly.

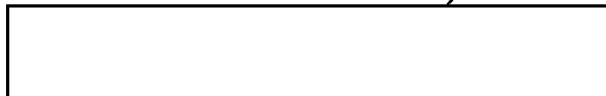
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5. Armed conflict between the East and the FMG, or the eruption of tribal or communal violence elsewhere in Nigeria, would affect some US interests. We do not think that violence would be directed against whites, but some of the 6- 7,000 US citizens, including over 800 Peace Corps Volunteers and some 350 US Government employees, scattered throughout Nigeria would be exposed to danger. US petroleum producing companies are likely in any event to be liable to heavy pressure from competing federal and regional governments, each claiming to be the proper recipient of revenues, and the companies are likely to seek guidance from the US Government. In the event of a breakdown in the present uneasy stalemate, both sides will probably seek at least moral and political support from the US. The FMG has already asked for arms. Such developments would pose difficult policy problems for the US.

FOR THE BOARD OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES:



SHERMAN KENT
Chairman

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